

FACULTY OF MUSIC UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Historical Performance Ensembles

San Giovanni Battista

Oratorio

by

Alessandro Stradella

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Wednesday, March 27, 1991

8 pm

Walter Hall

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PROGRAM

Salome	Katerina Papadolias (Act I) Kim Hardy (Act II)
St. John Baptist	Jean Fiset
Herod	Brett Polegato
Counsellor	Martin Houtman
Herodias	Kim Hardy (Act I) Katerina Papadolias (Act II)

Chorus:

Ariel Harwood-Jones, Lisa Lindo, Christina Shave, Mark McCallen, Bryan Martin

PART 1

1. Sinfonia Orchestra

St. John bids farewell to the forest; he has been called by Heaven to go to Herod's court.

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| 2. Recitative: "Amiche selve" | St. John |
| 3. Aria: "Deste un tempo" | St. John |
| 4. Recitative: "Selve beate" | St. John |

The disciples warn St. John not to go, but he believes his faith will triumph over the evil at court.
The disciples warn him "only deceit and fraud rule there."

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| 5. Chorus: "Dove, Battista" | Disciples |
| 6. Aria: "Alla corte" | St. John |
| 7. Aria: "Soffin pur rabbiosi fremiti" | St. John |
| 8. Recitative: "Restate" | St. John |
| 9. Chorus: "Dove, Battista" | Disciples |

The Counsellor and Salome urge Herod to put aside the cares of state and turn to pleasure and relaxation.

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| 10. Recitative: "Invitto Erode" | Counsellor |
| 11. Aria: "Volin pure" | Salome |
| 12. Recitative: "Sì, de tuoi devoti" | Salome |
| 13. Aria: "Anco in Cielo" | Counsellor |
| 14. Recitative: "Ma poi lasciando" | Counsellor |

Herod calls for songs and dances as Salome expresses her desire that the king continue to love her. She is joined by Herodias and the Counsellor, and all express hope for Herod's continued affection.

15. Aria: "Sorde dive" Salome
16. Recitative: "Non più, cedo" Herod
17. Trio: "Non fia ver che mai" Salome, Herodias, Counsellor

St. John breaks in on the happy scene to condemn Herod for taking his brother's wife. Herod responds with fury and orders St. John chained and imprisoned.

18. Recitative: "non più, ferma" St. John, Herod, Counsellor, Salome
19. Aria: "Tuonerà tra mille turbini" Herod
20. Aria: "Di cieco carcere" Herod

The chorus demands death for the guilty one, while St. John welcomes the harsh chains.

21. Chorus: "S'uccida il reo" Court
22. Aria: "Se pegno gradito" St. John
23. Chorus: "S'uccida il reo" Court

Herod likens his power on earth to that of Jove in heaven, and with Salome he likens St. John's fate to a butterfly who has flown too near a brilliant flame and is lost.

24. Arioso: "Proverà se questo scetro" Herod
25. Duet: "Freni l'orgoglio" Salome, Herod

* * Intermission * *

PART II

The court celebrates Herod's birthday with dances and songs and praise from both Salome and the Counsellor. Herod offers Salome whatever she desires but she demurs. St. John can be heard warning against the false gods of pleasure.

26. Aria: "Vaghe Ninfe del Giordano" Salome
27. Recitative: "Giorno sì lieto" Counsellor
28. Aria: "Anco il sol" Counsellor
29. Recitative: "O, di quest' occhi miei" Herod, Salome, St. John
30. Aria: "Io, per me non cangerei" St. John

Herodias instructs Salome to ask for the head of St. John so that by triumphing over the king she will possess the realm. Salome makes the request but Herod hesitates: "but if he were innocent...?"

31. Recitative: "Figlia, se un gran tesoro" Herodias, Salome, Herod
32. Recitative: "Bramo sol che Battista" Salome, Herod
33. Duet: "Nel seren" Salome, Herod

Salome plays on Herod's vanity until finally he gives in.

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| 34. Recitative: "Deh, che più tardi" | Salome |
| 35. Aria: "Queste lagrime e sospiri" | Salome |
| 36. Recitative: "In questa de miei affetti" | Herod |
| 37. Aria: "Provi pur le mie vendette" | Herod |
| 38. Arioso: "Il castigo d'un empio" | Herod |

St. John accepts his fate while Salome gloats over his impending death.

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| 39. Recitative: "Quando mai fia" | St. John |
| 40. Duet: "Morirai. Uccidetelo" | Salome, St. John |
| 41. Recitative: "Cadesti al fine" | Salome |

Salome asks for the crown of victory. She sings of joy and happiness, while Herod feels only torment and unhappiness.

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| 42. Aria: "Su, coronatemi" | Salome |
| 43. Recitative: "Che nel comun gioire" | Herod |
| 44. Duet: "Che gioire" | Salome, Herod |

PROGRAM NOTES

Alessandro Stradella (1644-1682) has long been famous more for his personal life than for his music. His amorous indiscretions led to his being the target of two assassination attempts, the second of which succeeded. During his lifetime, however, his reputation as a composer was beyond reproach, and his fame extended as far as the British Isles. His oratorio, *San Giovanni Battista*, is one of the finest seventeenth-century examples of the genre. While John the Baptist dominates the first part of the work, the second is given over to a fascinating power struggle between Salome and Herod, from which Salome emerges victorious. Stradella responds with a sometimes dizzying alternation of musical styles; especially effective is the dramatic use of the chorus in Part One.

San Giovanni Battista was first performed on March 31, 1675, as part of a series of fourteen oratorios given that spring at the Oratorio della Pietà of the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini in Rome, in observance of the Holy Year. The performers at the premiere were among the best in Rome; the soloists were drawn from the renowned choir of the Sistine Chapel (all men, of course), and the orchestra included the young Arcangelo Corelli. The orchestra was quite large for the time, numbering nearly thirty. The players are divided into two groups, one of the soloists (the "concertino"), and a larger body (the "concerto grosso"), a Roman trademark. Not long after, Corelli was to employ this style to great advantage in his Concerti Grossi.

We should not be misled by the size of the orchestra; at this time, orchestral numbers varied widely, depending more on the importance of the occasion and the availability of musicians than on any standard or ideal. Later performances of *San Giovanni Battista* (and several are recorded) doubtless used forces similar to our own. However, contemporary evidence also indicates that the chorus, at least in Rome, would have been sung by only one person per part, regardless of the size of the orchestra. It has been suggested that the soloists might have combined to form the chorus. While this would certainly be possible, it is dramatically ineffective. In any event, records show that the choir was indeed an independent entity, requiring its own personnel, and we have followed this practice.

--Bryan Martin

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HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE ORCHESTRA

Violins

Nancy Case
Sophie Drouin
Brian Power
Christopher Reibling
Kleis Swan
Deanna Vardy

Violone

James Creeggan

Violas

Bridget LaMarche
Michelle Speller

Celli

Margaret Gay
Darach McGee

Harpsichord

Jennifer Griesbach

Organ

Eun-Seong Cho

Rehearsal coaches: Bryan Martin, chorus
Margaret Gay, orchestra
Mary Enid Haines, soloists

Historical Performance Ensembles consist of a number of chamber groups involved in the interpretation of music according to the style of its time. The ensembles include graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Toronto under the direction of Timothy McGee, assisted by Mary Enid Haines.

The modern edition used in this performance is by Prof. David Daniels of Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. We are grateful to Dr. Daniels for allowing us to use his edition and we acknowledge the cooperation of the University of Iowa in loaning us the score and parts. We also thank the following for assistance in a variety of ways: David Fallis, Susan Grant, Leslie Korrick, Terry McKenna and Nancy Zylstra.

This concert is presented as a part of the "Italy in Canada" festival.

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